

Building The Quality Of Education In The Conflict Situations Within The Palestinian Education System

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Abstract. *This paper begins with an effort to build the quality of education in the Palestinian Ministry of Education's 2017-2022 Strategic Plan for Education. From these efforts, the Palestinian Ministry of Education agreed to the design of the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals program, especially regarding quality education. This is seen in the target to be achieved to ensure equal access by 2030 to all levels of education and vocational training for marginalized groups, including people with disabilities. Through qualitative methods, the data collection technique used is library research for primary data obtained from the Strategic Plan for Education 2017-2022 by the Palestinian Ministry of Education and news contained on websites, youtube and journals in the 2017-2023 range. Secondary data as supporting data is obtained using relevant literature in the form of analysis results or assessment reports from government, private or research institutions. After the review, it was revealed that efforts to build the quality of Palestinian education were prioritized on three main targets: 1) Ensuring access to safe, inclusive and quality education at all levels, especially for people with disabilities; 2) Develop student-centered teaching and learning pedagogy and environment, and; 3) Improve accountability and results-based leadership, governance and management. As an implication of these efforts, there has been an increase in female student participation and completion from primary to tertiary education.*

Keywords: *building quality education; conflict situations; Palestinian education system*

A. Introduction

The education system in Palestine is still trying to build the quality of education despite the conflict situation. The prolonged Israeli-Palestinian conflict has destroyed the educational infrastructure and territorial integrity of the Palestinian state, thus damaging the economic system which affects the loss of students' rights to quality education. However, all of that is not an obstacle, various efforts with the help of other countries and humanitarian agencies, the implementation of quality education is still realized. As stated by the Palestinian Ministry of Education (2017: 6) that "The 2017-2022 Strategic Plan for Education aims primarily to transform the Palestinian education system from the *Talqin* (memorization) method to a dynamic learner-centered education method, where teachers act as learning

facilitators and develop skills and competencies according to scientific advances". Even during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Palestinian government still ensures education to run efficiently, as revealed by the Palestinian Teacher Creativity Center (2021) in its report that "The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Palestine has an impact on all stakeholders in the education process. The Ministry of Education is prioritizing the development of digitalization that expands schools, and develops pandemic management curriculum". The idea of building quality education in any education system in the Palestinian state is a commitment in an effort to provide the right to quality education to Palestinians.

It is undeniable that the commitment to build a quality education system in Palestine is a form of struggle based on nationalism against the continuous pressure of colonialism. According to Abu-Saad & Champagne, (2006) explained that "Formal education in Palestine, since the beginning, has never been under the control of the Palestinian people; starting with the Ottoman Empire (Turkey), then the British Mandate, and then the state of Israel, the Palestinian education system was under the control of colonial / external administration that lasted continuously". Historically, education in Palestine dates back to the Turkish Ottoman Empire that ruled from 1516-1917, where public education was introduced in the second half of the 19th century. However, the level and importance of education offered by these schools was relatively low, so the Palestinian Arab population was not very interested. In addition to the Ottoman public schools, there are also several private traditional Islamic schools (*kuttabs*) as well as non-Muslim religious schools that operate independently. These schools usually taught Arabic as the language of instruction, with an emphasis on religion and morality. There were no universities or high schools in Palestine at that time. Those wishing to complete higher education had to travel to Damascus or Istanbul. Restrictions on access and admission made it difficult for Palestinians to obtain higher education. However, the development of the education system in Palestine occurred gradually during the Ottoman Empire. And of course these conditions have influenced the development of the education system since then. Thus, when Palestine was ruled by the Ottoman Turks, education both in quality and number of students was only available in its basic form, because there were several educational institutions, such as *kuttab* and privately to religious schools. At the same time, secondary and higher education continued to be restricted due to the lack of access and choice for the Palestinian people. As the Turkish Ottoman Empire weakened, the Zionist movement began to emerge in Europe in the late 18th century as a nationalist movement with the aim of establishing a Jewish state in Palestine. The movement was motivated by the belief that Palestine was the historic homeland of the Jewish people due to their presence in biblical history. Zionism also sought to find a solution to the dilemma of Jewish anti-Semitism in Europe. The Zionist movement described Palestine as "a state without a people, for a people without a land" and portrayed Zionist settlers as pioneers who developed deserts and infertile lands. The movement used the idea of an unoccupied area in terms of "civilized barbarism" to justify the Zionist occupation, even though the area was not completely uninhabited. The Zionist movement received support from European colonial powers, especially Great Britain, which through the Balfour Declaration of 1917, committed to establishing a Jewish state in Palestine and facilitating Jewish immigration from Europe.

During British rule in Palestine from 1917 to 1948, the education system of Palestinian Arabs was largely based on state schools and private educational institutions. Although access to schools increased during this period, Palestinian Arabs had little control over their own education. Public schools only offered basic education with limited secondary education. Private Islamic and missionary schools helped educate about a third of Palestinian Arab students, while Jewish schools operated independently under the auspices of the Zionist network. However, access to education is the privilege of the few and does not extend to universities. Although the teachers and principals are Palestinian, the curriculum, decision-making and policy formulation are still under British control. Educators often encountered foreign curricula due to content mismatches especially in the field of Arab history. Palestinian Arabs began to demand for their education system when the Ministry of Education was obliged to give the Jewish community full responsibility for their public schools. Although the attempt at autonomy ultimately failed, this struggle led to a growing national and political consciousness among educated youth. Although access to schooling increased during British rule, education remained geared towards suppressing the freedom of Palestinian Arabs. This was when the Zionist movement gained international support and boldly unilaterally declared Israel's independence in the year of 1948, triggering a war between the Arab states and Israel, which ended with the defeat of the Arab states and the conquest of 78% of Palestine. After the 1948 war, more than 700,000 Palestinian Arabs fled and/or

were expelled from the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories, with only 160,000 remaining. Due to the disintegration of the Palestinian people, a small part of Palestinian education is under the control of several different countries and institutions. The education system for Palestinians living in Israel is managed by the Jewish majority, while schools in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are managed by Jordan and Egypt. In addition, UN aid agencies set up schools for Palestinian refugees in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as well as in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. The fragmented situation was further complicated after the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in 1967, which led to the control of the education system in the territories by the Israeli military administration.

Since 1994, the Oslo accords between *Palestine* and Israel made education the responsibility of the Palestine Authority (PA) in implementing the education system and initiating educational reforms, including developing a national curriculum and building educational institutions. By developing inclusive education "together with a number of international organizations, working hard to improve educational opportunities for learners including people with disabilities and refugees. These agencies are the *Department of Economic and Social Affairs* (DESA), the *World Bank*, the *World Health Organization* (WHO), the *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization* (UNESCO), the *United Nations Children's Fund* (UNICEF) and the *United Nations Relief and Works Agency* (UNRWA). All these institutions operate in various instruments to realize education according to international standards, with their programs and planning activities" (Aladini, 2020). These efforts have yielded significant results, according to the Palestinian Bureau of Statistics, the illiteracy rate in Palestine is among the lowest in the world, at 2.3 percent among the population aged 15 years and older in 2021. These results show a decrease for both sexes. The proportion of boys dropped from 7.8% in 1997 to 1.2% in 2021. At the same time, illiteracy among girls fell from 20.3% to 3.5% over the same period. At the regional level, the illiteracy rate in the West Bank dropped from 14.1% in 1997 to 5.2% in 2021, while in Gaza from 13.7% to 2.0% for the same period (adarareliev.com). Likewise, with efforts to improve teacher competence, according to Ghani, *et.al* (2022) argued that "In line with the worldwide trend to include *Computational Thinking* (CT) in the curriculum, many schools and teachers in Palestine have been introduced to elements of computational thinking concepts and skills". However, all of this is not easy, because of the policies of the state of Israel (*apartheid* policy in www.bbc.com) which seem to discriminate against Palestinians to be unable to pursue education and remain in ignorance, as a result, more and more infrastructure and educational facilities are damaged and collapsed. In a conflict situation, according to Ayu (2020) that "the Palestinian people are motivated to continue to prioritize education as an instrument for the resistance movement". So, Israel's aggressiveness towards Palestinians has actually become a way for the Palestinian government and people to be more motivated in advancing their education.

This paper aims to analyze the efforts to build the quality of education in conflict situations in the Palestinian education system. It is intended to explain the efforts made by the Palestinian authorities together with humanitarian agencies under the UN organization to build the quality of Palestinian education that is colored by conflict due to pressure from Israel so as to have a positive influence on improving the quality of education and human resources for Palestinians. To be able to outline these objectives, there are three questions in this paper, namely: 1) how efforts to build the quality of education in conflict situations in the Palestinian education system; 2) why the importance of building the quality of education in conflict situations in the Palestinian education system, and 3) what are the implications of efforts to build the quality of education in conflict situations in the Palestinian education system. The answers to these three questions are expected to provide knowledge to education observers and education experts as well as all parties who have concern and curiosity about efforts to build quality education in conflict situations in the Palestinian education system, so that it can be used as a foundation in advancing education in Indonesia for the better.

This paper is based on the argument that efforts to build the quality of education in conflict situations in the Palestinian education system have become a driver in the development of education in Indonesia and other countries in the world. This is because the orientation of building the quality of Palestinian education encounters more challenges and obstacles that come from Israeli policies that have implications for the destruction of infrastructure and educational facilities, whereas one of the supporters of the realization of quality education through the availability of adequate infrastructure and facilities.

B. Literature Review

1. Palestinian Education System

Reported from wikipedia.com that "in the Palestinian education system, compulsory primary education covers grades 1-10 which is organized free of charge and divided into preparatory levels (grades 1-4) and strengthening levels (grades 5-10). Secondary education (general secondary schools and some vocational secondary schools) covers grades 11 and 12. In higher education, there are 11 universities (10 private and 1 public) and 11 technical colleges (4 Palestinian Authority, 2 UNRWA, 4 public and 1 private), all offering mostly four-year courses. In addition, there are 19 academy schools (1 Palestinian Authority, 9 public, 2 UNRWA and 7 private), mostly offering two-year diploma education in technical and trade fields".

The school in this refugee camp was first established in 1949 by the International Red Cross. There is also an UNRWA Primary School for the first six years which started in the 1959- 60 academic year. Currently, UNRWA schools have grades 1-10, but do not yet offer secondary school (grades 11 and 12). UNRWA education services have played an important role in Palestinian education since 1967. The *United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East* (UNRWA) is an aid and humanitarian agency, which provides education, health, social and other emergency assistance to Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, as well as in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, for one specific country. Unlike the UNHCR, the UN refugee agency that helps refugees for the whole world.

The Palestinian Ministry of Education is responsible for the entire education sector, from preschool to higher education, as well as teacher recruitment and training. The Ministry of Education serves as the point of contact for the Education directorate in the handling of educational issues. The Ministry of Education (MOEHE) is also responsible for the management of state educational institutions and oversees private educational institutions and UNRWA- supervised institutions in refugee camps. In addition, education in Palestine is centralized in terms of providing curriculum, textbooks, rules, and policies. The organizational structure of education consists of 22 directorates (in district offices) of education, including 16 in the West Bank and 6 in Gaza.

To this end, the Palestinian Ministry of Education (2017: 19) developed the *Education System Strategic Plan (ESP) 2017-2022* by approving the UN's 2030 *Sustainable Development Goals* for Palestine, specifically on Quality Education. The plan is based on the vision of a Palestinian society that "possesses values, knowledge, science and technology and is able to use that knowledge for its liberation and development". The targets seek to ensure equal access by 2030 to all levels of education and vocational training for marginalized groups, including people with disabilities. The ESSP also suggests three main goals: 1) Ensure access to safe, inclusive and quality education at all levels, especially for persons with disabilities; 2) Develop student- centered teaching and learning pedagogies and environment, and; 3) Improving accountability and results-based leadership, governance and management.

Education Level

a) Pre-primary Education

Pre-primary education is for children, usually starting at the age of 4 years and up to the age of 6 years. The aim of this education program policy is "to provide a personality-appropriate environment for children to grow physically, mentally and socially and enable them to prepare for primary school. Emphasis is placed on opportunities to develop the child's personality through games and other activities such as drawing, picnics, storytelling and poetry recitation that are appropriate to the age and environment" (Sayma, *et. al*, 2022).

b) Basic Education

Basically, basic education in Palestine is organized from grades 1-10, divided into preparatory levels (grades 1-4) and strengthening levels (grades 5-10). The Palestinian Ministry of Education's Strategic Plan for Education 2017-2022 (2017: 173) states that the goal of primary education is to "Ensure equitable education services centered on male and female students in all primary schools, and develop their scientific and attitudinal skills and abilities in a sustainable manner".

In the evaluation system, for grades 1-4, no written assessment has been conducted. Teachers only conduct formative assessments, observations, portfolios and student work as a basis for moving on

to the next grade. In grades 5 - 9, assessment begins, and students can even repeat if they do not achieve the average student achievement for one year. There is no remedial teaching for students nominated to repeat during their repeat year. Graduation exams can be conducted in grade 9 for a certificate of completion and in grade 10 for placement according to the student's ability to continue their education to a secondary level.

c) Secondary Education

As for secondary education, it is held for 2 years covering Grades 11 and 12, consisting of general secondary education and some vocational secondary schools. In addition, there is also a kind of vocational training institution which is also 2 years long. The general objective of the secondary education program: "to prepare qualified graduates from the secondary level for university and practical life" (Ministry of Education, 2017: 178). There is a final exam for which a Certificate (Tawjihee) is issued in grade 12 to prepare them for university entrance.

d) Higher Education

In Palestine, "the number of licensed and accredited universities in Palestine amounts to 53 institutions. These consist of 14 traditional universities (3 state, 8 public and 3 private universities), 19 university colleges (8 public, 1 state, 9 private and one UNRWA), 18 public colleges (2 public, 7 state, 6 private and 3 UNRWA) and two open universities" (Isaac, *et. al*, 2019). The length of higher education according to level for *Bachelor Degree* consists of 4-5 to 6 years. In addition, there are diploma programs for teachers. For the *master's* degree or *Higher Diploma*, the duration is about 2 years, while for the *Doctor/Ph.D* level it is about 3 years. The purpose of higher education is to "Provide direct and indirect support to universities, as well as provide scholarships for students and financial support such as loans and financial aid, stimulate the private sector to finance and invest in universities through regulations and legislation" (Ministry of Education, 2017: 198).

Curriculum and Learning

The curriculum in Palestine was developed to meet the aspirations of the people as a form of sovereignty based on democratic values. The importance of the curriculum is a means in achieving educational goals achieved by the provision of learning resources and tools in the form of textbooks and also other media such as the internet. Everything is prepared as a support for success in learning both at school and in the family. Reported from the Palestinian Ministry of Education website page that "The Palestinian curriculum considers the latest educational developments by introducing: 1) Teaching English from the first grade. Students who are currently in fourth grade, have studied English for four years with the provision of English books for them; 2) The teaching of technology applied to students from grade five to grade nine, followed later by the provision of technology books for grade ten; 3) Students from grade seven to grade ten study health and environmental topics; 4) A civic education curriculum is introduced to inform citizens of their rights and obligations to create a society that is aware of what is happening around it, and; 5) Additional topics such as informatics, contemporary issues, economics and management are also part of learning".

2. Conflict Situation

For almost three quarters of a century, the conflict between Israel and Palestine has been ongoing. Violence, killings and looting continue to occur, and it is not uncommon for countries around the world to condemn these inhumane acts. "Many have voiced that this conflict is not just an ordinary conflict, but a form of colonization and looting so that this problem cannot be resolved through conflict resolution" (Widagdo & Kurniaty, 2021). According to Shari'ah (2022) that "This conflict can be said to have originated from an assumption inherent in the minds of the Jews, who are currently mostly incorporated into the Israeli community, that they are the people who are the source of all cultures and civilizations throughout the world, which makes them feel the noblest and most entitled to ownership of the "promised land". They assume that the "promised land" is in Palestine, so they want to make Palestine as a *homeland* or destination and a place of return. Palestine is a land that is truly coveted by the Jews in Europe. But the struggle for this territory is now not based on religion, but political interests so that Palestinian land is legally recognized as a *national home* for the Israeli people". Because of the clash of interests between Israel and Palestine, the conflict has not been resolved, even through

discussions or peace negotiations between the two countries.

Holistically, the conflict that arises will certainly disrupt the system that has been built, such as the education system, besides the attention to the parties that must be protected is also the main focus, such as civil society, especially women and children. The various actions carried out by Israel have resulted in children as the next generation. The most ironic incident is the report of children who have to travel long distances every day to go to school, and still have to endure harassment when they are at Israeli military checkpoints along the separation wall in the West Bank including East Jerusalem. Harassment and violence perpetrated by both Israeli soldiers and settlers are ultimately a major factor in students dropping out of school, especially girls. There is also psychosocial stress among other children, both boys and girls (<https://tirto.id/cBus>).

Israel's desire to make the Palestinian territories as its territory, makes Israel have the freedom to carry out its actions. The actions taken by Israel are not only warfare in physical form, even in deciding a policy, including policy making in the field of education, such as changing the curriculum for schools in Jerusalem. As part of the strategy, Israel applies segmentation and separation of the Palestinian population in the Occupied Territories so that closeness and social ties are not formed between regions. As a result, they rename streets and settlements until the name of the area becomes a Jewish name and is included in the curriculum of Palestinian children. The purpose of all this is to Judaize Palestine, or to realize Jewishness, so that Palestine loses its identity as a nation. The implication of this policy is the occurrence of attacks on schools by the Israeli military, which can even end in school closures and demolitions.

As happened in Zahwat al-Quds school as a private school at the level of a kindergarten and elementary school in the Beit Hanina area of East Jerusalem. The school serves around 90 students aged 3-9 years old. Zahwat al-Quds School has come under attack from Israel, as the school staff refused to teach using the Israeli curriculum and instead chose to use the Palestinian curriculum (<https://uzone.id>).

The Israeli government, through the Ministry of Education, has also implemented radical textbook censorship, such as removing Palestinian national symbols, deleting anti-Zionist sentences and paragraphs, and even removing entire chapters as blank pages. The motive for this censorship is explicitly defined as a desire to protect students from reading that is deemed seditious. The implicit motive is Palestinian history. Therefore, their emphasis may be deliberately aimed at undermining the formation of a collective memory of Palestinian independence. Israel's primary goal is to teach Palestinians that when Israel was established in 1948, the historic Palestinian state was empty. And Arthur Balfour, the then Prime Minister of Great Britain, gave this uninhabited land to the Jews (<https://tirto.id/cBus>).

The Israeli military also raids schools for unclear reasons. One of the schools in Jerusalem that has been raided more than 10 times is Dar al- Aytam. The principal was detained and expelled from Jerusalem for 45 days. Because its students were accused of throwing stones at officers, police, soldiers and special forces often entered the school to raid. However, when an Israeli police spokesperson was questioned by *Al Jazeera* on the Dar al-Aytam issue, he chose not to respond. There are also airstrikes, which often occur in schools throughout the Gaza Strip. Other forms of attacks, such as the demolition of schools to be converted as military sites that have occurred in the Dkaka and Nablus areas (<https://uzone.id>).

The conflict has exceeded and clearly violated the rules of international humanitarian law. Apart from schools, Israel also damaged civilian buildings such as places of worship, electricity networks, hospitals and even civilian homes. Moreover, within days, dozens of Israeli troops bombed a civilian area allegedly used by Hamas (a Palestinian Liberation group) as a hideout by blowing it up. The devastation and loss of life cannot be compared to the Hamas rocket attacks on Israeli territory.

3. Building Education Quality

Realizing quality education in conflict-affected areas is certainly not as easy as in countries or regions where conditions are safe and fine. However, that does not mean that in conflict situations the efforts to realize quality education do not exist, even these efforts are greater and more passionate, because of a high sense of nationalism in fighting for rights and obligations as citizens. This phenomenon also occurs in the Palestinian Authority government through the Ministry of Education. According to Ayu (202) that "Resistance is not just a matter of taking up arms and fighting with physical strength, but effective resistance is resistance by prioritizing and collaborating between the

balance of the use of brains and muscles, intelligence and strength".

In an effort to provide quality education, the Palestinian Ministry of Education (2017: 19) developed the *Education System Strategic Plan (ESP) 2017-2022* by approving the UN's 2030 *Sustainable Development Goals* for Palestine, specifically on Quality Education. The plan is based on the vision of a Palestinian society that "possesses values, knowledge, science and technology and is able to use that knowledge for its liberation and development". The targets seek to ensure equal access by 2030 to all levels of education and vocational training for marginalized groups, including people with disabilities. The ESSP also suggests three main goals, namely: 1) Ensure safe, inclusive entry and quality education at all levels, especially for persons with disabilities; 2) Develop student-centered teaching and learning pedagogy and environment, and; 3) Improve accountability and results-based leadership, governance and management.

C Method

In this study the authors used qualitative methods, namely methods based on Post- positivistic, Naturalistic-interpretative, and Postmodernism philosophies used to research on natural object conditions, where the researcher is a key instrument who is also involved in the research (Sugiyono, 2001). This research model seeks to build reality and understand its meaning. The approach used is a narrative approach, which focuses on information about an individual or group of people regarding their lives told through historical traces (Faizin, 2020; Assjari, 2010).

The data collection technique used is *library research* with primary data obtained from the 2017-2022 Strategic Plan for Education by the Palestinian Ministry of Education and news found on websites, youtube and journals in the 2017-2023 range. Secondary data as supporting data is obtained using relevant literature in the form of analysis results or assessment reports from government, private or research institutions.

The data obtained is critically analyzed in the mass media system to examine efforts to build the quality of education in conflict situations in the Palestinian education system which is validated on each news platform and the results of the research report, so it is expected to see the reality and know the point of view used by the media when constructing and presenting news.

D Results and Discussion

1. Efforts to Build Quality Education

Tragically, Palestinians living under Israeli occupation experience various forms of violence, arrogance and warfare that threaten their lives, and hinder the progress and development of a nation. The education system is also victimized because it results in not achieving graduates within the planned time. In fact, Israel dares to blatantly prohibit the entry of educational facilities such as computers and make policies that hinder the progress of the Palestinian educational process, by closing schools, blocking roads and sieges, and preventing school construction. Likewise, the policy distorts the curriculum in Jerusalem and provides intimidation to implement the Israeli curriculum. The blockade of the Gaza Strip, preventing the entry of building materials to renovate schools, hampering school books, destroying the communication system between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. All of these have become challenges and obstacles in building a quality Palestinian education system.

Given the complexity of the problems faced by the Palestinian government, as an effort to realize quality education, the Palestinian government through the Ministry of Education made the *Education System Strategic Plan 2017-2022* by approving the UN's 2030 *Sustainable Development Goals* design program for Palestine. By three main goals and efforts to be made by the Ministry of Education. The following are the main points of the efforts to achieve these three goals (2017: 111-119), namely:

- a) Ensuring safe, inclusive and equitable enrolment access to education at all levels of the system includes several priorities, as follows:
 - 1) Maintain high enrollment rates at the minimum level of primary school (grades 1-4) for all in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Affairs and relevant educational institutions.
 - 2) Increase participation in pre-school education (kindergarten) through cooperation between the Ministry of Education, the private sector (especially kindergartens) and international organizations such as UNICEF and UNESCO.

- 3) Access to further education (vocational, science and humanities) was improved as enrollment in vocational education increased the most, followed by science and humanities.
- 4) Provide additional school buildings in response to the increase in student numbers by 2030 through cooperation between the Ministry of Education, higher education, local communities, local government and the private sector, as well as investment in education and an increase in the number of UNRWA schools.
- 5) Monitoring dropouts at all levels of education, especially after grade eight, in collaboration with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, local NGOs, civil society, and local authorities to ensure compulsory education up to grade ten and maintenance.
- 6) Increase enrollment in higher education by cooperating with non-governmental organizations in the field of student education, with the help of Arab and foreign financial institutions, and by providing scholarships to students in specific fields.
- 7) Increase the capacity of public technical schools.

In addition, protection and safe access to education should be guaranteed by strengthening relations with the international community, UN agencies, international human rights institutions and diplomatic representatives. Their goal is to protect the rights of Palestinian students in Zone C of the West Bank and Jerusalem.

Likewise, efforts to achieve equality and equal rights in education include initiatives such as increasing the participation of female students in technical and vocational education, designing integrated programs and services for early childhood and the disabled, and providing appropriate environments and facilities for students with special needs, promoting technical and professional education, identifying barriers and taking preventive measures to eliminate them. In this work, collaboration with international and local partners is essential. Increasing the capacity of loan funds is also a priority by increasing the number of grants and loans from Arab institutions and banks, international institutions and local institutions.

- b) Developing student-centered teaching and learning methods and environments, efforts made are
 - 1) Student-centered education is a priority in improving the quality of kindergarten and school education in Palestine.
 - 2) The curriculum was reformed at all levels and has clear evaluation standards to ensure the quality and relevance of education in the Palestinian context.
 - 3) A comprehensive measurement and assessment system will be developed to assess learning outcomes at key points in the educational journey.
 - 4) Provide an inspiring learning environment with free games, sports and reading facilities.
 - 5) Provide alternative learning and education methods for out-of-school children and youth. Evaluate and improve early childhood education and training policies and programs.
 - 6) Develop quality policies and programs for distance learning in higher education using appropriate technology.
 - 7) Offers opportunities for distance learning and training in information and communication technology.
 - 8) Offer quality literacy and numeracy programs.
 - 9) Promote the use of information and communication technology in literacy programs.
 - 10) Develop assessment tools for literacy and numeracy.
 - 11) Develop policies and programs to promote Education as Sustainable Development through teacher capacity building training.
 - 12) Support the development of a stronger assessment system within the framework of the goals of sustainable education (EDS) and education for all (EFA).
 - 13) Development of consistent and comprehensive policies on equality and persons with disabilities.
 - 14) Ensure the availability of water, electricity and toilets in each educational institution. An effective feedback system on the delivery of quality teaching through teacher professional development will be developed.
 - 15) Reducing the budget deficit of public universities.
 - 16) Establish clear criteria for quality assurance of institutional and program accreditation. Development of online learning and distance communication processes.
 - 17) Implement qualification strategies for teachers and teaching staff. Transform mentoring

system practices to empower teachers.

- 18) Guidelines and action plans will be developed to specifically promote teachers' professional skills in early childhood education and training.
 - 19) Create common cross-cutting policies for professional skills development, technical training, and cross-cutting linkages.
 - 20) Guarantee the quality of pedagogical specialization.
- c) Promoting accountability, results-based leadership, governance and management, efforts made are:
- 1) The priority of developing the legal and legislative environment of the Palestinian education system has been demonstrated through efforts such as developing a modern law on higher education and developing policies and laws that guarantee quality, free and equitable, publicly funded, intermediary primary and secondary education. .
 - 2) In the area of childcare and education, efforts are made to develop cross-sectoral and integrated policies and strategies, taking into account coordination between ministries responsible for nutrition, health, social welfare, child welfare, equity and adequate resources.
 - 3) Introduce flexible learning pathways in both formal and informal settings, including learning recognition and career choice services, to enable students to access higher education.
 - 4) The principles of non-discrimination and equality in and through education are prioritized in education policies, plans and budgets.
 - 5) Improving the effectiveness and efficiency of school administration and management by involving local communities and parents in school management. The importance of safe and quality education in Zone C (West Bank), particularly in Jerusalem, is maintained with intensive campaigns.
 - 6) Attention is paid to transparent and effective quality assurance of technical and professional education and cooperation to improve transparency and recognition of technical and professional education between countries.
 - 7) Mechanisms are needed to review sectoral plans and budgets for education, curriculum, teacher training and supervision to ensure compliance with the principles of equality, non-discrimination, human rights and intercultural education.
 - 8) Special attention is paid to information and classification of children with disabilities, literacy rates and equity of resources between schools and learning centers.
 - 9) International partnerships, partnerships with civil society, involvement of teachers and teachers' unions, and social dialog are considered important in the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of education policies. In emergencies and difficult situations, policy and budget planning is needed that includes risk assessment and emergency preparedness, as well as training support related to refugees, armed conflict and disasters.

The Palestinian Ministry of Education has main goals in an effort to build the quality of education, with 3 priorities namely: *First*, efforts to ensure safe, inclusive and equitable access for education applicants include several priority areas, such as: access to primary education, participation in pre-school education, access to secondary education and the organization of school buildings, handling school dropouts, participation in higher education, protection of education, equity and equalization, and increasing the capacity of loan funds. All of these activities are carried out in collaboration with various parties including relevant ministries, international organizations, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders local institutions.

Second, efforts to develop student-centered teaching and learning methods and environments, by investing in various aspects including program and curriculum development, evaluation of learning outcomes, provision of stimulating educational opportunities, training and rehabilitation of human resources, training and labor market needs and capacity building for scientific research.

Third, efforts were made to promote accountability, results-based leadership, governance and management by developing the administrative and organizational environment by organizing the central administrative structure and operational departments according to the service program structure of the strategic plan. The concept of results-based management was introduced at all levels of the ministry and efforts were made to improve school equity by type and socioeconomic status. Emphasis was also placed on partnership, coordination and cooperation, including international cooperation in education and research, as well as the incorporation of labor market partnerships in the design of real and comprehensive education programs. Crisis situations and challenges are about education policy and

budget planning, which includes risk assessment and preparation for crises such as disasters, conflicts, refugees and epidemics. Strategies to protect students, teachers and staff from violence are also considered.

These three main goals become a reference in building the quality of education in Palestine. Moreover, the Palestinian Ministry of Education has approved the UN's 2030 *Sustainable Development Goals* program. Thus, Palestinians are expected to be able to enjoy every access to education in their country, so that it has an impact on improving the quality of human resources as a form of preparation in fighting for Palestinian independence.

2. The importance of building quality education

Education is the main instrument in improving human resources, especially for progress and maintaining the integrity of a nation. The importance of education prepares citizens and communities for regional and global competition and to face challenges such as the information and communication revolution, the multiplication of information in an increasingly short time and the changes that will occur in the future.

In the situation of conflict that occurred in Palestine, the importance of education is built on 3 principles, namely: "a) The need for a mindset that education is an instrument in carrying out more effective resistance; b) War is a means of encouraging enthusiasm for gaining knowledge, and; c) Citizens who are of school age should not leave school even though they are in the midst of a war situation and live in refugee camps" (Ayu, 2020). Therefore, despite conflict situations, the ability of the education system to deal with continuous change is reflected in its ability to comprehensively develop and rehabilitate students, ensure access to modern and new information, manage life skills, preserve national identity, heritage, culture, technology and art and acquire human attitudes and values.

The changing political conditions due to the Israeli occupation and the right to Palestinian statehood and the struggle for national independence, which affect most aspects of Palestinian life, require Palestinians to develop a flexible Palestinian education system, which can respond to changes and improve skills for each individual for a better tomorrow. Thus, the importance of building quality education in the Palestinian education system was established through the Palestinian Ministry of Education (2017: 57) "with the aim of developing an effective strategic plan for the education system for 2017-2022, in line with the priorities of the National Development Plan 2017-2022, and towards achieving the 2030 sustainable development goals, especially related to quality education, and what it implies about the specific goals that the whole world wants to achieve by 2030".

3. Implications of Building Education Quality

Since the establishment of the Ministry of Education's 2017-2022 Strategic Plan for Education by the Palestinian Authority government, there have been efforts to build the quality of education in the Palestinian education system. One of the institutions that has concern for the progress of Palestinian children's education is the *United Nation Children's Fund* (UNICEF) which in 2022 conducted research on the development of education in Palestine. Reported from www.unicef.org that since 2019 as many as 800,000 children aged 0-8 years or 17% of the Palestinian population and as many as 14% or 112,000 under the age of five only 34% or 272,000 have participated in pre-primary care and education activities. Where, as many as 148,253 children are scattered attending Pre-primary education in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. According to Sayma, *et. al* (2022) that "it is not yet known whether the percentage of children enrolled in pre-primary schools has met the targets for 2020 and 2021, because of the Covid-19 pandemic, there are no recent statistics that can be verified. However, the ministry expects to meet the 70% target".

Based on UNICEF's 2022 research in *Palestine Education Fact Sheets*, it was found that "As many as 86 percent of Palestinian children who complete primary education by the age of 20. The findings are based on aspects of disparities by gender, region, and socioeconomic status, where one of the most striking disparities in completion reflected in the data is the gap separating young men and women. While 94 percent of adolescent girls completed their basic education, only 78 percent of adolescent boys did. As for completion rates by region, completion rates are highest in Jerusalem and Tubas at 90 percent, with a drop of 80 from 90 percent in the West Bank, and Ariha (Jericho) and al-Aghwar, where only 69 percent of children completed primary education. In the Gaza Strip, primary

education completion rates hovered around 90 percent for all areas except North Gaza, where 81 percent of youth completed primary education" (Unicef, 2022: 6-8).

The UNICEF report (2022: 6-8) suggests that "There has been a decline in completion rates for secondary education, with only 62 percent completing final secondary school, overall, of which three-quarters (73 percent) of young women and only half of young men (51 percent). This significant drop in completion rates suggests that once students complete their compulsory basic education, they become more prone to dropping out or complex with significant delays as a result of gaps in final or repetition grades. While this suggests that efforts to improve school attainment among girls have been successful, it is a reminder that the challenges to completion faced specifically by boys take longer. Barriers to completion may include pressure to start working at a young age as a means of supplementing family income as a result of socio- economic disparities".

UNICEF (2022: 17) found that by the end of 2019, 22% of the population of 5,629,829 Palestinians were in higher education at all levels. According to Shibib (2021) that "almost for years 51-60% of students in higher education are dominated by women". This is due to the high willingness of women to overcome the gap with men, especially in the field of work and career. From the results of the PCBS (*Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics*) report on young graduates in Palestinian society in August 2019, where the unemployment rate of diploma and higher education graduates in Palestine (aged 15-29 years) was 55.8% (37.8% in men and 72.0% in women) compared to 41.5% in 2007.

Efforts made by the Palestinian Ministry of Education together with partner institutions and international aid along with universities for the advancement of quality education have not achieved maximum results, considering the situation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict does have a negative impact on the implementation of the Palestinian education system, so that the tendency to get proper education cannot be fully felt.

In the results of an analysis conducted by Juzoor, a health and social development organization, it was stated that "Most Palestinian children live in precarious and uncomfortable conditions in low-income families, in villages and refugee camps they are also disadvantaged in terms of limited space and facilities. It is not uncommon to experience multiple challenges as a result of colonization, political violence, restricted mobility, overcrowding, poverty and a prolonged sense of trauma. They face the challenge of daily obstacles posed by occupation since they were first born and breathe with their quality of life having to be adjusted by the economic, political, social conditions around them. About half a million children in Palestine need humanitarian assistance to access quality education" (Juzoor, 2021: 4).

However, in an effort to build the quality of education in Palestine, the implications in a positive direction can also be felt, at least women in Palestine have begun to have the enthusiasm to pursue education, even in 2019 it was found that at least "11% of women in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank who have a Ph.D. are spread across 56 educational institutions" (Shibib, 2021). In addition, this is also evidenced by the findings of UNICEF in its research report, that at every level of education starting from primary and secondary education the level of education completion is dominated by female students. This means that the willingness to get quality education for women in Palestine is increasing so that it slowly erases the existence of gender gaps and differences.

E Conclusion

Palestinians have been living under occupation for a long time, the alternating governments that occupy the Palestinian state make the Palestinians long for freedom and independence of their country that is recognized by the countries of the world. The hope to be themselves, without expecting the help and compassion of other countries or humanitarian agencies is the dream of every Palestinian. Likewise with access to education, despite the challenges and obstacles caused by the conflict from the Israeli occupation, the Palestinian authorities continue to design the development of quality education.

Through the Palestinian Ministry of Education, which has agreed to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals program from the United Nations, developed a Strategic Plan for Education 2017-2022. Although these efforts encountered obstacles, especially during the spread of Covid- 19 which hit all countries in the world, thus affecting the education system, the same conditions occurred in the Palestinian education system so that the agreed plans for the field of education have not been maximally achieved. However, a real positive impact is starting to be seen in the participation and graduation rates of female students from the education level elementary to higher education.

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